

# CAPITAL CITY COURIER.

Holiday Number.

Lincoln, Nebraska, December 25th 1890.

Ten Cents.

## On the Spanish Main.

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NATURE has done much for Colombia, but the civilization of this century has as yet done nothing. This region was visited for the first time by Americus Vesputi in 1499, and Christopher Columbus in his fourth trip across the Atlantic in 1502 reached the Isth-

mus of Panama, and established the first Spanish settlement on the American continent. It was called the duchy of Veraguas. To day there is a province (county) of Veraguas in the state of Panama.

At first the Spaniards were resented most bitterly in the establishment of settlements by the aborigines who belonged to the heroic Caribbean race. But the energy, the bravery, and in many instances the cruelty of such Spanish leaders as Balboa, Pizarro, Cortez, Almagro and Quisada overcame the daring devotion of the native savages and the conquest of the Spanish Main by the Spaniards was accomplished between 1533 and 1550. The oldest city is Panama, founded in 1518; next is Cartagena, established in 1533; and last but not least Bogota, created in 1538. These are essentially Spanish cities to this day, and in a political and social sense, the most important of the country.

### INDEPENDENCE.

For over 300 years the Spaniards held full sway; it was in 1820 when the cruelty and tyranny of the Spanish rulers had become unbearable, that it was overthrown, under the leadership of Simon Bolivar, the most remarkable and grandest character that South America has given birth to, and whose memory is held in veneration there, as that of George Washington is with us; and yet this Simon Bolivar, whose feats of arms are unequalled; this Liberator of Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru; the first president of Colombia, who for a score of years, rich with millions which he expended for the support of his troops, died poor and forlorn at the age of 47, not far from Barranquilla, without even a change of clothes to be put into his coffin with. I have seen the man who gave the dead hero a suit of clothes to lay him in his bier, and when he told me the sad story my heart felt and indeed. I was also informed by the same gentleman that in the very room where Bolivar died, hung the portrait of George Washington presented to the Liberator by General Lafayette, and of priceless value. Republics are indeed ungrateful, and no greater example of it is on record than that of General Simon Bolivar!

During the occupation of Colombia by the Spaniards, great works were constructed by them. Among others, the fortifications of Cartagena and the monumental churches in that place; the water batteries at Puerto-Bello and the fortified Castle at the mouth of the Chagres river near Colon. They are indeed worthy of the old and best masters; and it is a fact that to this day, nearly three centuries after they were built, they are still almost as good as new. The Inquisition building is yet to be seen in Cartagena; within its walls can yet be seen traces of the abominable deeds of cruelty to which patriot or felon, gentleman or menial, became martyrs or victims. The one great surprise, when I looked over this, was, that the present civilization has not blown that building to atoms, so that even the sight of it should not remain to see as a reminder of the greatest infamy ever perpetrated in the name of Christianity.

### DECADENCE.

Since the Spanish rule has been superseded no new monuments have been erected; all traces of great engineering skill seem to have disappeared. Even the great public highways paved to perfection are disappearing, and it is only now and then that the remnants of these can be discovered, hidden by a fifty years' growth of tropical vegetation. I have sometimes sighed in my own mind: Why

is it thus? I explain it as follows: The Spaniards used the Indians and peons as slaves, and they were the most unmerciful of task masters, as evidenced by history and tradition. Today the Indian, as well as the peon, is free to work or not to work, as he sees fit, and he deems it fitter not to work. It is hard to say it, but slavery in that country, in such a climate, seems to have had an apology. Since its abolition, time has certainly been at a standstill, aye, even gone backwards, so far

opened, while the de Lesseps, father and son, have amassed wealth to the amount of one hundred millions. I have seen much of this canal and have traveled on its waters for the distance of twelve miles from its Atlantic mouth. I believe in the feasibility of this great inter-oceanic water-way, and it is beyond any question the very place on this continent and the only place where a tide water level canal can be constructed. Its length is forty-five miles. The length of the Nicaragua canal is 166 miles, and it can never be made a tide water level water-way. One-third of the Panama canal is certainly finished, while the work on the Nicaragua canal, short of some on the breakwater at Greytown, is not as yet commenced. Besides, there are some international reasons strongly in favor of the Panama, as for instance: The Clayton-Bulwer treaty makes the Nicaragua canal an international affair between the United States and Great Britain; on the other hand, the treaty of 1846 between the United

will at an early day cause a great deal more. It also causes the Panamanians to look with little friendship on the United States; he knows that if he were enabled by some means to whip the Colombian, he can never whip us. We are, so to speak, Colombia's watch dog on the Isthmus, and I have as yet failed to see what Colombia gives the United States in return.

### FINANCES AND COMMERCE.

Financially Colombia like all her sister republics in South and Central America, is not in the very best of standing. The man who have had charge of her finances have been either incapable or dishonest, and the revenues of the people have been squandered or stolen. Her customs duties amount to about \$3,000,000 per annum, the full one-half of which is pledged in payment for former contracts to capitalists in Europe, for years to come. Hence reciprocity, if it were otherwise possible, is a material impossibility with Colombia, unless the United States assumed her debts. The duties on imports are very high, and the little we send there—comparatively—pays its full share; however England, France and Germany have by all odds, the lion's share of Colombia's trade. Even if it was not that the United States allows all the products of Colombia entrance free, the United States would have no trade at all over there; they trade with us just sufficiently to balance accounts, and our wholesalers are very happy when they do that well. And in this respect what is true for Colombia is true for all republics in South America. The bonds of these countries are all below par; some very far below par—Colombia's bonds are worth only forty per cent—and it is questionable whether any of these republics can float a loan without making various sacrifices and jeopardizing their sovereignty, as in the case of Peru lately with the Grace contract. This being the case it is not surprising at all to see all of these republics jump at the chance of a commercial Zolverien with the United States; they have all to gain by it; but what has the United States to gain? This is another question.

It is a fact that coffee, hides, rubber, and all other South American products, excepting wool and sugar, enter the United States free of duty, and have been doing so for many years. We all remember when coffee paid an import duty; but when it was abolished what did Brazil do? Brazil monopolized the coffee trade then, so to speak, and does so to a great extent to-day, but will not do so much longer. Well, Brazil put an export tax on the coffee; we lost the duty, and Brazil gained it. What has Costa Rica done lately? She has also put an export duty on coffee, ostensibly on the ground that the money so raised would be used for the construction of a theatre at San Jose; but the duty will remain long after the theatre is built and paid for.

I believe there has been some compromise or other, made lately, on sugar, but not on wool; now then there is very little sugar coming to the United States from South America, none from Colombia; nearly all the sugar comes from the West Indies, principally Cuba, which belongs to Spain; so that if there is reciprocity at all in sugar the reciprocity is with Spain, not with South or Central America. And what is true for Spain in that respect is true for Great Britain, through her well fixed possessions of Jamaica and San Lucy, and her South American possession of Demerara, all three, great sugar countries. I do not intend to criticize anyone, I only give the crude facts, such as they are. I have read many criticisms against Mr. Blaine's reciprocity plans, and I have been surprised at his critics' failing to strike at the bottom facts of the case. They seem to forget that the West Indies are European dependencies, instead of South American sovereignties; above all they seem to forget that all the sugar imported from the West Indies comes to us crude, and that it has to be refined in New York or Philadelphia, and that these refineries will be the only great beneficiaries of the reciprocity on sugar. Wool is the thing that calls for reciprocity; it is the one, and I may say the only genuine South American product on which reciprocity might benefit the people of the United States, since all the rest of South American products are on the free list. An honest reciprocity with South America must include wool, and to his credit be it said, I believe Mr. Blaine favors it.

### THE RACES.

In Colombia alone there were when the Spaniards first came eight millions of native Indians; so at least I read in a work by Las



*I wish ye a Merry Christ-mas  
With plentie of Christ-mas cheer  
With alle my harte have I done my parte  
Farewell, for another yere!  
H. Davis.*

as modern public improvements are concerned.

However the American, the Anglo-Saxon is finding his way over there, and stubs of railroads here and there begin to inaugurate a new era. Not only the Anglo-Saxon is taking a hand in the regeneration of Colombia, and the Spanish republics generally, but even the Gaul is at work on the Isthmus of Panama, where he has undertaken to cleave this continent by a work that will forever be to his imperishable fame and glory. True, for the time being this work has ceased, not because of any engineering difficulties, but simply for the want of money. This has been brought about by the recklessness of that greatest of superannuated intellects, Ferdinand de Lesseps, once honored by the world at large irrespective of race or creed, and today held in contempt by his own countrymen, because of the unmitigated falsehoods which were propagated by him, and in his name to the credulous Frenchmen, who heaped their treasure in his keeping only to find that the canal company was bankrupt, at about the time he said the canal would be

States and Colombia, and still in force at this day, gives the United States, and the United States ALONE, a semi-protectorate over the Isthmus of Panama.

### COLOMBIA AND THE UNITED STATES.

A glance at the map shows at once the geographical importance of Panama. This state is one of the nine comprising the republic of Colombia. It is, to all intents and purposes, isolated from the mother country by the insurmountable difficulties for land communications. In fact, it is to Colombia as if it were an island, and Colombia has no navy nor merchant marine. Moreover, the spirit of secession is innate among the native Panamanians, as it was in the South Carolinian; and this spirit will sooner or later give rise to a bloody civil war. Nevertheless, Colombia is secured in her sovereignty over the state of Panama, inasmuch as the treaty of 1846 just above referred to, makes it incumbent upon the United States "to maintain the sovereignty of Colombia over the Isthmus of Panama." This clause of the treaty has already caused the United States much trouble, and